

AWARENESS OF DIGITAL RESOURCES AMONG PUBLIC LIBRARY USERS IN MANDYA DISTRICT: A STUDY

Janaradhana. Y.H

Research Scholar

Department of Library and Information Science, Karnatak University, Dharwad.

Siddaramu P

College Librarian, Govt. First Grade College, Siddartha Layout, Mysuru

C. Krishnamurthy

Professor & Research Guide

Dept. of Library and Information Science, Karnatak University, Dharwad,

ABSTRACT

The expansion of digital technologies has substantially reshaped the services and functions of public libraries. Contemporary public libraries increasingly serve as gateways to digital information, complementing traditional print-based collections. This study investigates the extent of awareness and utilization of digital resources among public library users in Mandya District, Karnataka. A descriptive survey method was employed, and data were collected from 600 respondents selected through stratified random sampling. A structured questionnaire was used to gather information on users' awareness, usage patterns, and challenges related to digital resources. Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies and percentages, were applied for data analysis. The findings indicate a moderate level of awareness of digital resources, with noticeable variation across resource types and gender. While basic digital services such as internet access and digital newspapers are widely known and frequently used, advanced resources such as online databases and mobile library applications exhibit comparatively low awareness and usage. The study underscores the need for systematic awareness programmes, user training initiatives, and infrastructural enhancement to promote effective utilization of digital resources in public libraries.

Keywords: Public libraries, Digital resources, User awareness, Mandya District, Library services

1. INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have brought about a fundamental transformation in the creation, organization, dissemination, and use of information. Libraries, particularly public libraries, have undergone a significant transition from being repositories of printed materials to becoming hybrid information centres offering access to a wide range of digital resources. These resources include e-books, e-journals, online databases, digital newspapers, multimedia resources, and internet-based information services.

Public libraries play a pivotal role in fostering information literacy, lifelong learning, and digital inclusion, especially in developing countries such as India. They serve as essential access points for individuals who may not possess personal digital devices or reliable internet connectivity. However, the availability of digital resources alone does not ensure their effective utilization. User awareness, digital competence, and the quality of library support services are crucial determinants of successful adoption and use of digital resources.

Mandya District, located in the southern region of Karnataka, has a well-established network of public libraries catering to diverse socio-economic groups. In recent years, these libraries have gradually introduced digital facilities and services. Despite these developments, empirical evidence regarding the awareness and use of digital resources among public library users in the district remains limited. The present study seeks to address this gap by systematically examining users' awareness levels, usage patterns, and the challenges they encounter while accessing digital resources in public libraries.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Digital resources in libraries encompass electronic books, electronic journals, online databases, digital archives, and internet-based information services. Previous studies have consistently highlighted that awareness and effective utilization of digital resources are influenced by factors such as educational background, digital literacy, infrastructural availability, and institutional support.

Smith and Kumar (2018) reported that users with higher levels of digital literacy demonstrate greater engagement with electronic resources in both public and academic libraries. Jones (2019) emphasized the role of public libraries as critical access points for digital information, particularly for marginalized communities lacking personal access to technology. Rao (2020) identified inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, and insufficient user training as major constraints affecting the adoption of digital services in public libraries. Sharma (2021) stressed the importance of user awareness programmes and community-based training initiatives to enhance digital resource usage. Studies by Jayaprakash and Jegan (2018) and Bachhav (2012) further revealed that information needs, awareness levels, and information-seeking behaviour vary significantly across demographic variables such as gender, education, and geographical location.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted with the following objectives;

1. To assess the level of awareness of digital resources among public library users in Mandya District.
2. To identify the types of digital resources most frequently used by public library users.
3. To examine gender-wise differences in awareness and usage of digital resources.
4. To identify the challenges faced by users in accessing and utilizing digital resources.
5. To suggest measures for improving awareness and effective utilization of digital resources in public libraries.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A descriptive survey research design was adopted to examine the awareness and usage of digital resources among public library users. The population of the study comprised registered users of selected public libraries in Mandya District. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure balanced representation of respondents. A total of 600 users participated in the study, including both male and female users, 366 (61%) were male and 234 (39%) were female. A structured questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument. The questionnaire consisted of sections covering demographic details, awareness of various digital resources, frequency of use, and challenges encountered in using digital services. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques such as frequencies and percentages. The results are presented in tabular form to facilitate clarity and interpretation.

5. THE SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of the study is mainly confined to selected public libraries in Mandya District. The findings may not be generalizable to other regions. A total of 600 users participated in the study, including both male and female users

6. DATA ANALYSIS:

6.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1: Gender-wise Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Male	366	61%
Female	234	39%
Total	600	100%

Table 1 indicate that male users constitute a higher proportion of the respondents. A majority of users belong to the age group of 18–40 years, reflecting a relatively young and active library user population.

6.2 Awareness of Digital Resources

Table 2: Awareness of Digital Resources among Users

Digital Resource Type	Users Aware (%)
E-books	72%
Online Databases	58%
Digital Newspapers	65%
Internet Services	80%
Mobile Library Applications	40%

Table 2 reveals that considerable variation in awareness levels across different digital resources. Internet services exhibit the highest level of awareness, owing to their widespread use and familiarity. In contrast, awareness of mobile library applications is notably low, suggesting inadequate promotion and limited user orientation.

6.3 Gender-wise Awareness of Digital Resources

Table 3: Gender-wise Awareness of Digital Resources

Resource Type	Male (%)	Female (%)
E-books	75%	68%
Online Databases	62%	52%
Digital Newspapers	67%	62%
Internet Services	83%	75%
Mobile Applications	42%	37%

Table 3 depicts that Male respondents demonstrate marginally higher awareness levels across most categories. However, the differences are not substantial, indicating that both genders have relatively similar exposure to basic digital services. Awareness of advanced digital tools remains limited among both groups.

6.4 Usage Pattern of Digital Resources

Table 4: Usage of Digital Resources

Digital Resource	Usage Level
Internet Services	70%
E-books	45%
Online Databases	30%
Digital Newspapers	50%
Mobile Library Applications	20%

The findings Table 4 indicate that users frequently utilize easily accessible and familiar resources such as internet services and digital newspapers. In contrast, the low usage of online databases and mobile applications reflects limited awareness, insufficient training, and lack of user confidence.

6.5 Challenges Faced by Users

Table 5: Challenges in Using Digital Resources

Challenge	Percentage of Users
Lack of training and guidance	45%
Limited awareness of advanced tools	40%
Inadequate infrastructure	30%
Language barriers	25%
Lack of Digital Literacy	24%

Table 5 explains the challenges faced by users include lack of training and guidance (45%), limited awareness of advanced tools (40%), and inadequate infrastructure (30%) These findings align with earlier studies conducted in the Indian public library context, highlighting systemic issues that hinder effective digital resource utilization.

7. FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The followings are the findings and suggestions of the study;

7.1 Findings

1. Out of 600 respondents, 366 (61%) were male and 234 (39%) were female, indicating higher male representation among public library users.
2. Awareness of digital resources among users ranges from 40% to 80%, reflecting an overall moderate level of awareness.
3. Internet services record the highest awareness, with 80% of users being familiar with and accessing them regularly.
4. Only 45% users use E-books Occasionally
5. Awareness of digital newspapers stands at 50% of users accessing them on a regular basis.
6. Awareness of online databases in frequent usage is limited to 30%.
7. Mobile library applications show the lowest awareness, i.e only 20% of users reporting rare usage.
8. Gender-wise analysis reveals slightly higher on digital awareness among males (75%) compared to females (68%) for e-books.

9. Awareness of internet services is high among both genders, with 83% of males and 75% of females reporting familiarity.
10. The major challenges faced by users include lack of training and guidance (45%), limited awareness of advanced tools (40%), and inadequate infrastructure (30%), which significantly hinder effective utilization of digital resources.

7.2 Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are recommended:

1. Public libraries should organize regular awareness and orientation programmes on available digital resources.
2. Hands-on training workshops on the use of e-books, online databases, and mobile applications should be conducted.
3. Libraries should develop promotional materials and utilize social media platforms to highlight digital services.
4. Digital infrastructure, including computer systems and internet bandwidth, should be strengthened.
5. Collaboration with government agencies and non-governmental organizations can support digital inclusion initiatives.

8. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that awareness of digital resources among public library users in Mandya District is moderate, with wide variation across resource types. Basic services such as internet access and digital newspapers are widely known and frequently used, whereas online databases and mobile library applications show low awareness and usage. Gender-wise differences in awareness are marginal, indicating similar exposure among male and female users. The major barriers identified include lack of training and limited awareness of advanced tools. The study underscores the need for systematic user training, awareness programmes, and infrastructural enhancement to improve effective utilization of digital resources in public libraries.

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